

speaker I have is Senator Owen Elmer.

SENATOR ELMER: A very brief comment. Given the situation that we have, colleagues, it seems inappropriate to start a new education program when more meritorious, old established programs, such as our UN-O tech school at Curtis, as our number one veterinarian program in the United States is faced with extinction. If we fund this in the light of cutting that and throwing it over the precipice of the budget cut, we are being a little hypocritical, and I would like to have you think about that as you cast your ballots on this. Thank you.

PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Elmer. Senator Hannibal, please. I don't see him at the moment. Oh, yes, there you are. I see you now.

SENATOR HANNIBAL: Mr. President, and members, I rise to oppose the committee amendment because I oppose the bill. I am very concerned, we are talking so much about this program, and, again, we are going to get into a debate as to what the public perceives and what actually is happening during the debate, and you run the risk of standing up and talking about being against educational programs for our gifted children in this state. And far be it from me to talk for anybody else, but I believe that there probably isn't anybody in this room that would not like to see excellence in education for all of our students in the state, and especially our gifted students because they will, in fact, be our decision makers of tomorrow and we need to do those kinds of things. However, we also have to be realistic and the people have made that point on the floor how you must be realistic about what our budgetary situation is right now. And as Senator Johnson, Senator Hall, and others have pointed out, if you pass the bill with the Scofield amendment, you are really just making a political decision and saying, yes, we want to help them but, no, we don't want to spend any money on them, and so it probably wasn't a good policy decision to do that. That is why I have to oppose this or a budgetary issue. On a budgetary issue, as Senator Elmer points out, and Senator Warner pointed out, Senator Scofield, and others have pointed out, we don't have the funds to fund the programs we have already on the books. As a matter of fact, we are looking at tremendous cuts at existing programs. The last thing that we need to do is to bring a new program on line, something significantly new with significant budget impacts, and for Senator Johnson's, Vard Johnson's sake, the bill has not been capped at 200 people. The bill as it is amended sets a 200 person floor for seniors. The